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West German Churchmen Barred from Opening EKD Service

(Berlin) - Some 2,000 persons gathered at St. Mary's Church in East Berlin to attend the opening service of the Synod of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), although police refused many West German church leaders - including six bishops - permission to enter the East sector for the service.

While the East German Government had earlier forbidden any of the EKD sessions to be held in the sector, the synod's presidium had expected that West German churchmen would be permitted to attend the opening service at St. Mary's Church.

Bishop Hanns Lilje of Hanover, and the president of the All-German Synod, Konstantin von Dietze, were among those who were refused permission to enter the Brandenburg Gate, dividing the two sectors.

Another worship service for West Berlin churchmen was then conducted at St. John's Foundation in the West sector, where the main meetings had been scheduled. One of the major items on the agenda will be to elect a successor to Bishop Otto Dibelius, president of the EKD council, who is retiring because of age.

West Berlin Mayor Willy Brandt commented that it was "simply shocking" that the West German churchmen were prohibited from attending the opening worship service. Earlier, the mayor and other West German political

leaders termed the refusal of the East German Government to permit any of the EKD sessions to be held in East Berlin as both a grave anti-church provocation and an alleged violation of Berlin's four-power status.

The Western allies also protested the "illegal action" of the East German government in barring the churchmen from attending the service. The protest was sent on behalf of the three Western city commandants to Maj. Gen. Nikolai F. Zakharov, the Soviet commandant in East Berlin.

Prior to the opening of the synod, Walter Ulbricht, East German Communist party chairman, accused leading West German church leaders of being "unChristian". He singled out Bishop Dibelius and his associates as "professional wolves in sheep's clothing".

Mr. Ulbricht's remarks were made when he received a delegation of East German Protestants, led by Emil Fuchs, a retired professor of theology, who brought with them a petition signed by 32,000 East German church members which pledged loyalty to the government's policies.

"We are sorry," Mr. Ulbricht told the delegation, "that exponents of the West German churches started a fight with us." He said he would have preferred cooperation, but West German church leaders "pushed their unChristian game so far that every path was closed to us".

Meanwhile, the official East German newspaper, Neue Zeit, contended that the new EKD synod was a "NATO body", and said its "partisan and provocative composition" had been assured by pro-NATO elements within the EKD even before its first sessions were held.

However, West German newspapers commented that the East German Government's actions against the synod testified to their determination to split the EKD and enlarge the breach between the two parts of the country.

EPS, Geneva.

WCC Executive Committee Ask Nuclear Test Ban


(Geneva) - The Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches has called upon the nuclear powers to stop all forms of nuclear weapons testing which can now be detected, and to agree to ban underground testing of smaller nuclear weapons.

The policy-making body in a statement adopted at its semi-annual meeting here said the ban on underground tests should be "at least for a specified period with arrangements for research to devise more adequate means of detection".

Such agreement, it declared, is "an important prelude" to the discussion of the whole range of the disarmament problem and to the development of the guarantees required and to the reduction of existing stockpiles of nuclear weapons.

The Committee said that while decisions in these areas involve risks, "yet failure to act involves even greater risks, for armaments do not stand still and their complexity and range are constantly increasing. Technical obstacles to effective inspection and control grow with every delay".

It added that it welcomed the decision to resume on March 21 the Geneva Conference on the Cessation of Nuclear Weapons Testing.



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A third section of the statement urges "peaceful cooperation and agreement" in outer space exploration if "the perils and chaos resulting from man's invasion of outer space are to be avoided". (See Document Appended)

Major portion of Committee time during the five-day meeting was devoted to planning for the World Council's Third Assembly to be held November 18 - December 6, in New Delhi, India.

The Assembly will bring together over 1,000 church leaders from all over the world, in the first major meeting of the WCC held in Asia.

In the opening session, WCC general secretary Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft, in a six-months review of WCC work, noted the increasing number of informal contacts between Roman Catholics and Protestants, but cautioned against confusing these first steps towards better relationships with a final solution to the problems which separate the two faiths.

"It is only when conversations are begun that the real extent of the problem is discovered," he said.

In other sessions, the Committee:

RECEIVED applications of three churches for membership. These applications, which must be formally acted upon by the Assembly before becoming official, came from the United Church of Central Africa in Northern Rhodesia, the Eglise Evangélique de New Caldonia, and the Iglesia Pentecostal de Chile. The last is the first application for membership received from a Pentecostal Church. If approved, the three churches would raise total WCC membership to 181 churches.

VOTED to send an observer to the Christian Peace Conference to be held in mid-June in Prague, Czechoslovakia. A WCC observer has been present at such conferences in previous years.

HEARD reports that the great majority of the initial reactions have been "positive" to a proposed expansion of the statement of the basis for WCC membership, which will be voted upon at the Assembly. Present membership is based on acceptance of "our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour." The new basis would read: "The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scriptures and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

ADOPTED a statement expressing gratitude for the consultation on race relations of its eight member churches in the Union of South Africa, held under WCC auspices in December, and noting with approval the consultation statement which recognizes all racial groups who permanently live in the Union as "indigenous" with equal rights. It also welcomed the proposal for formation of a continuing body to be known as the South African Conference of the World Council of Churches.

The eleven Committee members represent churches in England, Sweden, Germany, Czechoslovakia, the USA, Ceylon and India. The chairman is Dr. Franklin Clark Fry, New York, also chairman of the Lutheran World Federation and the United Lutheran Church in America. EPS, Geneva.

WCC Will Sponsor Intercommunion Consultation

(Geneva) - A four-day consultation on the celebration of Holy Communion at ecumenical gatherings will be conducted at the Ecumenical Institute of the World Council of Churches at Bossey, March 1-4.

Sponsored jointly by the WCC's Youth Department and the Department of Faith and Order, the consultation will bring together 15 participants representing seven European countries and 12 confessional bodies.

The Rt. Rev. Stephen F. Bayne, executive officer of the Anglican Communion, will be chairman of the informal consultation which was inspired by the First European Ecumenical Youth Assembly, held last July at Lausanne, Switzerland.

Delegates to the assembly affirmed that they would not cease to demand that their respective denominations and the World Council "work towards the establishment of an increasingly inclusive intercommunion".

"We hope and pray that before we come together again in an ecumenical youth conference, enough progress will have been made on this point," the assembly declared. "We know that there are no easy solutions here. There is no unity at the expense of truth. But there is also no obedience to the truth which does not compel us to recover unity".

The chief purpose of the consultation will be to examine recent ecumenical developments and to consider their implications for the present practice for communion services at ecumenical gatherings. It will not attempt to draw up any formal proposals, but will seek to clarify the main lines along which the various agencies and departments of the World Council should work in the immediate future.

The attitude of churches affiliated with the WCC is mixed on intercommunion. However, the World Council follows the formula established at the World Faith and Order Conference held in Lund, Sweden, in 1952. That agreement stated that open communion services should be held at ecumenical gatherings whenever possible on the invitation of a local church or churches which sanction such services.

EPS, Geneva.

Church Leaders Accused of Violating Soviet Law

(Moscow) - Leaders of various Christian groups in Russia have been accused of frequent violations of Soviet law in proselytizing and expanding religious and church social activities.

The charge is made in the current issue of Kommunist, journal of the party's Central Committee, which called for an intensification of atheistic propaganda by the state and a drive by local authorities to curb the revival of Christian influence.

Singling out the Pentecostal and Jehovah's Witnesses groups, the article warned that ideological hostility of some members to communism's world outlook sometimes developed into a "political lack of loyalty".

Kommunist noted that, while members of most religious groups were loyal citizens, a lack of "political maturity" has "hindered them from understanding that hidden in the religious phrases of some preachers are aims deeply hostile to the Soviet system".

"The teachings of sects on the subject of morality," it said, "are in irreconcilable contradiction to the feelings, ideas, the way of life and social practices of an advanced and conscientious builder of communism."

The article called upon Komsomol (Communist Youth League) and other party organizations to take steps to counter the tendency of some young people to join congregations of the All-Union Baptist Evangelical Church, Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostal and other religious groups.

While it challenged the statement of some Protestant ministers that many young people were joining religious groups, the article added: "The fact that in a number of places young boys and girls, among them graduates of middle and technical schools, are joining sects must become a matter of special attention of the Komsomol and party organizations."

"The resurgence of activities of sectarian preachers and the strengthening of their influence on certain people can be explained by a neglect of atheistic and scientific education," the article said.

In Rome, meanwhile, the leading Jesuit publication Civiltà Cattolica charged that the Soviet government is putting strong pressure on the Russian Orthodox Church to support its propaganda campaign against the Roman Catholic Church.

In an editorial, the magazine contended that recent events in Moscow indicate that the internal and foreign policies of the Moscow Patriarchate are today subject to heavy pressure from the government.

The editorial was prompted by an article in the Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate in which the patriarch denounced certain Vatican policies as "aggressive". The charge was dismissed by Civiltà Cattolica as "absurd".
EPS, Geneva.

Polish Government Taking New Hard Line With Churches

(Vatican City) - The "liberal" policy inaugurated by the Polish Government toward the Roman Catholic Church at the time of the Hungarian revolt in 1956 is now disintegrating, Osservatore Romano, Vatican City newspaper, has charged in a front-page editorial.

The article, initiated by assistant editor Federico Alessandrini, contended that the government of Wladyslaw Gomulka is now engaged in the outright persecution of the churches. It said the change in policy was noted after the recent conference of world Communist leaders in Moscow.

Osservatore Romano pointed especially to the fact that permission to teach religion in the public schools is now being withdrawn. Such instruction had been permitted under an agreement reached by Mr. Gomulka and Cardinal Wyszynski in December, 1956.

Meanwhile, in Warsaw it was reported that the Polish hierarchy has warned priests and laymen against joining or supporting Pax, a pro-government Catholic organization.

Following a recent meeting of leaders of Pax and the government, Catholic spokesmen contended that it could be assumed that the government had pledged increased aid to the movement and would use it to create division among Catholic clergy.
EPS, Geneva.

Hungarian Priests Arrested

(Vienna) - Charges of "leading an illegal organization engaged in anti-state activity" have been lodged against eight Roman Catholic priests and two other persons, the Budapest Radio has reported. Another source said nine priests were involved.

The station said four of the clergymen had "criminal records." It further reported that one was also charged with "indecent behaviour in connection with juveniles" - an accusation which Catholic spokesmen here said is being made against some priests to discredit the church in Hungary.

Budapest Radio identified the leader of the alleged plot as Silvester Koermendy, a tank captain in World War II. It said the one woman arrested was Maria Bolca-Zichy, the former Countess Domonkos Zichy, a member of an old Hungarian noble family. EPS, Geneva.

Church Criticism of Films and T.V. Called Mis-Directed

(New York) - Dr. S. Franklin Mack, executive director of the National Council of Churches' (USA) Broadcasting and Film Commission, has warned that churches would be ill-advised simply to sit in judgement on television and motion pictures because of their exploitation of sex and violence.

Speaking at the commission's annual meeting here, Dr. Mack noted that the churches are too much a part of the culture moulding these media to escape involvement "in the travail of these industries".

"Violence for the sake of violence and sex for the sake of sex are merely by-products of the twin evils of mediocrity and irresponsibility," he declared.

"We must consider the damage that may be done by radio and TV through the portrayal of man as less than man, and through the pernicious debasement of what the New Testament refers to as 'honourable, just, pure and gracious'."

Calling for "statesmanship" in the criticism by the churches and for a clarification of their policy regarding mass media, Dr. Mack said church groups must appeal to the informal individual conscience and for support of agencies of one's own choice which can bring legitimate pressure to bear on the industries.

The chief problem, he observed, is to interest Christians in supporting church-produced movies and television programmes and in patronizing good films and programmes and rejecting inferior ones. EPS, Geneva.

Use of Birth Control Information Urged

(San Juan) - The United States has been urged to make birth control information available to all countries and to cooperate with a United Nations study of population problems.

The request was made in a telegram to President John F. Kennedy from the Commission on Christian Responsibility for Rapid Social Change of the Disciples of Christ, which held a four-day meeting to consider the impact of economic and social problems here.

"We commend Puerto Rico's efforts to curb population pressure," the telegram to Mr. Kennedy stated. "Since the present rates of population expansion in several countries cancel gains made by economic growth and seriously menace world stability and peace, we recommend that the government of the United States give all possible aid to nations requesting assistance with programs designed to limit population."

"In view of the complexity of the social and moral issues which are involved," it continued, "we urge US participation in action and study in this field by the United Nations."
EPS, Geneva.

Dr. Ramsey Sees Nuclear Arms as War Deterrent

(Sheffield) - Dr. Arthur Michael Ramsey, the Archbishop of York, has commented that the possession of nuclear weapons by the Western nations has probably prevented a general war from breaking out during the last decade.

Dr. Ramsey, who will succeed Dr. Geoffrey Francis Fisher as Archbishop of Canterbury, made the remark at the annual Anglican rally for members of Sheffield University.

"I believe," he said, replying to a question on nuclear arms, "that (they) have acted as a deterrent, and a force for peace."

When a student asked whether the Archbishop believed that preparations for nuclear war were consistent with spreading Christian love, he replied:

"I think it depends on whether the preparation is something that leads to nuclear war or is in fact something that is likely to stave off nuclear war. However, it is very dangerous to go on relying on such a deterrent, and the only answer is general disarmament.

"It must be disarmament not only in nuclear weapons but in all kinds of weapons because, for the breaking out of a general war, conventional weapons can be just as dangerous as nuclear weapons, and once it has broken out the war might be nuclearised."

In answer to another question, Dr. Ramsey stated that, while efforts should be continued to achieve general disarmament, any type of partial or unilateral disarmament would not assist to that end.
EPS, Geneva.

EUB Leaders Study Methodist Merger Plan

(Dayton, Ohio) - The next General Conference of the Evangelical United Brethren Church, scheduled for October, 1962, will receive a definite proposal for or against merger with The Methodist Church in the United States.

This was made clear in a formal statement released by Dr. Reuben H. Mueller, senior EUB bishop and chairman of the EUB commission on church federation which will meet April 17 with a similar group from the Methodist commission on church union to discuss the factors involved in such a proposal.

However, EUB leaders have already voiced concern about such factors as "questions of absorption" into the Methodist episcopate, the Methodist organizational structure, and the difference in size between the two bodies. (The Methodists number 9,000,000, while the EUB Church is composed of some 760,000 members.)

Bishop Mueller noted that if the General Conference votes favourably, it may authorize the commission to work out a plan and basis of union for submission to the 1964 Methodist General Conference and the 1966 EUB Conference.
EPS, Geneva.

In Brief

The church established in the Congo by the Mission Covenant Church of Sweden has achieved complete independence, and all former mission property has been turned over to the new church. It is being governed by a board composed of four nationals and three Swedish missionaries.

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Dr. Urho Kekkonen, president of Finland, has issued a "Prayer Day" appeal calling upon the nation to thanksgiving, repentance and prayer. The appeal, issued annually, stresses the importance of spiritual health and moral integrity, and underlines the Ten Commandments as a basis for action.

* * *

A monument will be erected on March 31 in the fishing village of Onoura near Nagoya, Japan, to three Japanese sailors who aided in the translation and publication of the first Japanese Protestant Bible more than a century ago. Coinciding with the unveiling of the monument will be an exhibition of the first Japanese Bible in one of the Nagoya department stores. Lectures on the Bible will also be given in the city.

* * *

The next meeting of the executive committee of the Lutheran World Federation is scheduled to be held in Warsaw, Poland, June 27 - July 1, the LWF announced in Geneva, Switzerland. One of the committee's major tasks will be to elect a successor to Dr. Carl E. Lund-Quist, who resigned as LWF executive secretary last August because of poor health.

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In Haiti, Father Claudius Angenor has been installed as acting Apostolic Administrator of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Port-au-Prince. His appointment was made less than a month after the government expelled Bishop Remy Augustin, who had been named as administrator by the Holy See. Father Angenor's appointment apparently had the endorsement of the government of President François Duvalier, who has blamed "foreign" priests as largely responsible for unrest in the country. Both Bishop Augustin and Father Angenor are native-born Haitians. (See EPS No.3)

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The first Protestant mission television station at Quito, Ecuador, has completed its trial programmes and is expected soon to receive official Government permission to start regular broadcasting. The station is part of the "Voice of the Andes" network.

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The Lutheran Church in north west Tanganyika has been given a mobile "policlinic" by the Bethel mission of "Innere Mission" of the German churches. The Mission will also contribute towards the expenses of a school in the district.

EPS, Geneva.

DocumentStatement on Nuclear Weapons Testing Adopted by the Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches at Geneva

The World Council of Churches and its Commission of the Churches on International Affairs have at various times warned against the dangers in an accelerating armaments race and urged international action to reduce national armaments with provision for inspection and control. The Executive Committee of the World Council of Churches, in session at Geneva, desires at this time to encourage renewed effort on three issues with which previous statements have dealt in greater detail.

First, the governments possessing nuclear weapons should promptly negotiate a treaty to cease all forms of nuclear weapons testing which can now be detected, and agree to ban underground testing of smaller nuclear weapons, at least for a specified period, with arrangements for research to devise more adequate means of detection. We welcome the decision to resume the Geneva Conference on the Cessation of Nuclear Weapons Testing 21 March 1961, and trust that such an agreement may be reached with all possible despatch and thus provide an important prelude to arms control and progressive disarmament.

Second, any decision to stop nuclear weapons testing ought to lead to a further commitment to stop nuclear weapons production and to reduce existing stockpiles. Moreover, the whole range of disarmament and the guarantees it requires, including provisions for warning against surprise attack, must be dealt with: conventional armaments, guided missiles, biological and chemical warfare, as well as nuclear weapons. We express the hope that disarmament negotiations will be re-opened at the earliest possible moment, giving appropriate place to the responsibility of the United Nations in this area.

Third, if the perils and chaos resulting from man's invasion of outer space are to be avoided, the nations must seize every opportunity for peaceful co-operation and agreement. Military rivalries are too dangerous to project into space. The positive efforts of the United Nations to meet these needs call for firm and unflagging support.

The decisions which need to be taken entail obvious risk. Yet failure to act involves even greater risk. Technical obstacles to effective inspection and control grow with every delay, for armaments do not stand still and their complexity and range are constantly increasing. In such a situation as this, prompt action is imperative.

Geneva, February 1961

EPS, Geneva.